



January 29, 2024

Subcommittee on Health Care and Financial Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the National Education Association's 3 million members and the 50 million students they teach and support in public schools in 14,000 communities, we appreciate the opportunity to offer comments for the subcommittee's January 30 hearing, "America's Report Card: Oversight of K-12 Public Education."

The onslaught of the once-in-a-lifetime global COVID pandemic upended all our lives, leaving students especially shaken. While deaths, serious illness, uncertainty, and panic were steadily rising, educators devoted themselves to meeting the unprecedented challenges students and families faced. Teachers managed the hurried transition from in-person to distance, and later hybrid, learning. Schools prepared and delivered nutritious meals to students in need. They distributed devices and other supplies in their communities. They secured Wi-Fi hotspots to keep students connected. These and other efforts kept students—and families—from isolation and eased suffering. Now, four years since the pandemic emerged, educators are dedicated to meeting their students' academic needs and helping them heal from the trauma they endured at a time of intense upheaval and loss.

Yet, instead of supporting students and the educators who teach and nurture them, some in Congress are looking for scapegoats and distractions. Students and families are desperate for lawmakers' attention, commitment, and creativity. Unfortunately, too many members of this body are using divisive issues to take the focus away from our most critical mission: Ensuring that all students, no matter where they live or what their economic status, have a challenging education that sparks their imagination, provides opportunities to explore and develop their talents, and fuels their desire to learn—especially following the disruption of the pandemic.

As students continue to recover from pandemic-caused learning disruption, the House majority has done nothing to address longstanding inequities that mean some students have a smorgasbord of opportunities in their schools, while others—particularly those in low-income communities—sometimes lack even the basics. We note that the majority's proposed education budget would slash Title I by 80 percent and cut overall funding by 30 percent through not investing in services that we know work, such as tutoring and after-school programs. The majority has also opposed efforts to support mental health services, essentially abandoning America's most vulnerable students. If the goal is to position young people for success, this is surely the worst course of action to take.

Parents are demanding more from this Congress. They want students to have the resources they deserve and the opportunities to pursue their dreams. They want their children's schools to be safe from gun violence, places where students are free to learn and experienced educators are free to teach. If you are serious about educating and uplifting America's students, please focus on what they truly need.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association